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### Forum to stress worker's health

WELLNESS: Business leaders will learn ways to help employees maintain diet and exercise programs.

by Lora Hines

An Inland nutrition organization on Wednesday will hold a forum to teach area businesses how to implement workplace wellness programs. Business leaders will learn that creating workplace exercise groups and including fruits and vegetables in vending machines could help employees maintain diet and exercise programs, said Valerie Comeaux, a worksite coordinator for the *Network for a Healthy California*. She works with businesses in Riverside, San Bernardino and Inyo counties. The *Network for a Healthy California* was established to help low-income residents eat more fruits and vegetables. The forum is at least the second such program to be held within the past couple years to teach people the value of good nutrition and exercise. Wednesday's forum will begin at 7:45am at the Riverside County Health Foundation at the Riverside Community Hospital. Speakers at Wednesday's forum will include Dede Benson, who runs the city of Fontana's Healthy Fontana program. City officials started the program in 2006 to fight obesity and improve nutrition and activity. Benson has created fitness boot camps and cooking classes to help city residents improve their health. "Hopefully, the participants will be able to take away something to modify their work site and will inspire their work sites," Comeaux said. "We're trying to empower the work site and employers to do this on their own. But you have to have buy-in from the top down to the bottom." Most forum participants tend to be those officials who track company insurance rates and want to reduce costs, Comeaux said. The forum teaches businesses that company wellness and exercise programs can be inexpensive and bring a significant return on investment and help improve employees' health, she said. "Forming a walking club is an activity that's inexpensive," Comeaux said. "It would be an activity that easily could be taken outside the workplace and done at home. "Contact Comeaux at 951-358-5385 to learn how to create workplace wellness and exercise programs. Reach Lora Hines at 951-368-9444 or [lhines@PE.com](mailto:lhines@PE.com)